



CHARLENE WHEELLESS

RESILIENT. AUTHENTIC. UNSHAKEABLE.



"Charlene possesses the confidence to challenge the status quo and propose constructive alternate viewpoints and approaches to challenges. [It] is a trait that sets Charlene apart and one from which Bechtel has benefitted."

COO, Bechtel Corporation

"Charlene combines business acumen and strategic thought to bring forward the best solutions to business challenges. I could always depend on Charlene to come up with a unique communication solution to a vexing business problem. She was a dynamic partner."

Paul V. Lombardi, CEO, DynCorp (retired)

"In looking for ways to inspire and empower the outstanding female leaders on my team, I immediately thought of Charlene Wheelless. They were blown away by her experience and insights. I've clearly seen their confidence in themselves, their ideas, and their value to our organization at a different level after their time with Charlene."

Brett Jewkes, Executive VP / Chief Brand and Communications Officer, AMB Sports + Entertainment / Blank Family of Businesses

"By implementing the tools and techniques provided by Charlene, I raised my game to the next level. I bolstered my executive presence and fine-tuned my business, presentation, and communications skills. Within three months of working with her, I gained promotion into the C-suite and feel extremely prepared for this opportunity."

Mari Eliot, Healthcare Executive

Individuals, companies, and organizations hire Charlene when they need a fixer – whether that means a keynote speaker to motivate, inspire, and empower audiences; a communications and issues consultant for strategy and reputation recovery; a Diversity diagnosis, or a leadership and inclusion coach to help them get the most from their investment in their people and their company.

Charlene Wheelless is a successful business executive, leadership coach/advisor, keynote speaker, and author. With more than three decades of experience in corporate affairs, communications, and operations, Wheelless leads her namesake firm, Charlene Wheelless LLC, where leaders and teams turn to strengthen their performance and leadership capability, communications, executive presence, and influence. Additionally, she is a unique resource to help C-suite leaders, teams, and companies turn DE&I intention into DE&I impact. Wheelless also serves as the senior advisor for equity and justice for APCO Worldwide, a global communications, and advocacy firm.

Before starting her firm, she served as the principal vice president of Corporate Affairs of Bechtel Corporation, a \$40B global infrastructure company. She was responsible for internal and external communications, reputation risk management, issues management, crisis communications, marketing communications, sustainability, and CSR. She provided executive counsel to business unit and C-suite leaders, including the company's chairman and Bechtel clients, on specific issues critical to the business and worked with foreign government representatives. Additionally, she led the development of a corporate diplomacy and international relations discipline in the company, managed and co-led the company's HQ relocation from San Francisco to the Washington, DC area, and is credited with rebranding the 100+-year-old firm.

She was also a board member of the Bechtel Foundation, the Bechtel Political Action Committee, and its Marketing and Business Development Council.

Earlier, Wheelless held senior-level positions at multi-national firms, including Raytheon, CGI, and DynCorp, among others, where she handled M&A communications as well as crises involving government, legal, financial, and reputation risk for individuals and companies for more than 25 years as a senior advisor.



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"Every syllable of this talk rang of truth earned many times over...one of our participants blurted out that this virtual session was 'like church,' and immediately people piled on to upvote that statement."

**David Murray, executive director,
Professional Speechwriters Association.**

"You are phenomenal. Thank you so much for your candid and inspiring anecdotes and really specific direction on allyship and anti-racism. I captured so many powerful ideas and calls to action."

**Carol Carruba, Principal
Highwire Public Relations**

"Charlene, thank you so much for joining us for EXCEL 2021: BBB Brand Conference. Your presentation was very well received.

When attendees were asked which conference session they were most pleased with, more attendees selected your 'fireside chat' than any other session. We greatly appreciate your bringing your expertise to our members with such timely and thought-provoking remarks on diversity, equity, and inclusion."

**Angela Isabell, Chief Diversity Officer
International Association of Better Business
Bureaus**

As the first Black female executive at Bechtel and other companies, Wheelless brings a powerful perspective on how to help leaders nurture and develop their minority talent and create a culture of inclusion. She also has emerged as an important voice and influencer on equity and justice and has appeared in scholarly and media outlets including, The Dialogue Project, Forbes, Business Insider, and Chief Executive.

She is an equally important voice in shaping the future of the communications profession. Wheelless is the immediate past chairman of the Page Society, the world's leading professional association for senior public relations, agency, and corporate communications executives. In this role, she provided guidance and strategy to Chief Communications Officers during the most difficult social and racially charged moments in recent history. She served as a thought partner to many executives as they grappled with handling these situations in the best interest of their people and their companies.

In 2021, Wheelless was hand-selected to be a member of Marshall Goldsmith's prestigious 100 Coaches, a collection of top executive coaches and leadership thinkers dedicated to paying it forward.

Amplify Publishing released Wheelless's debut book, 'You Are Enough! Reclaiming Your Life and Career with Purpose, Passion and Unapologetic Authenticity', in mid-2021. The book has achieved bestseller status on numerous lists, including Women and Business, Mentor and Coaching, and Breast Cancer, and won two independent book awards for best non-fiction and inspirational books of 2021.

'You are Enough!' chronicles Wheelless's experience as a Black female executive, her courageous fight with cancer, and takes readers on a journey of reclaiming their lives with purpose and passion. It has been considered a blueprint for a saner way for people of color, especially women, to climb the corporate ladder.



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"What a treat it was to have [Charlene] here with us this week. I am so appreciative that she took so much time to get to know our team ahead of the conversation, which was rich and engaging. I liked her reflection about how this is not going from broken to unbroken but from great to even greater. Her work is just another proof point of pure Charlene power and goodness. You are an INVESTMENT in our future."

Silicon Valley Tech Executive

"The book is fire."

David Albritton, General Motors

"Every chapter held meaning for me -- and made me think, reconsider and revise my outlook. Charlene shows strength in how her life story unfolded, yet it also provided me with the resolve to be stronger in my life, work, and way of thinking. It is a provocative read and made me think about what I could have done better in the past, but more importantly, what I will do differently in my future. An important read. Thank you, Charlene Wheelless, for sharing with all of us."

Howard Pulchin, APCO Worldwide

"Your book changed my life. Through [your] strength and candor, [you] motivated me to re-think my approach to my career, personal life, and health in terms of quality of life. I cried, and was inspired to have the strength to be brave."

**Keala Bilbao, Graduate Student,
DePaul University**

Wheelless has earned many awards over her career, including two Telly awards and more than 50 additional communications and leadership excellence awards. PR Week named her to the Global Power Book for most influential professionals in Public Relations for five consecutive years. The Network Journal named her among the 25 Most Influential Black Women in Business. She was also named by the Washington Business Journal as a Woman Worth Watching and to PR Week's Hall of Femme (now called Women of Distinction) Awards.

Wheelless is equally committed to her community, serving as the chairman of the HCA Virginia-Reston Hospital. Other board positions include the Institute for Public Relations, the Page Center, and The Black Experience, an effort to amplify the voices of leaders in the Black Community. She previously served as the chairman of the Reston Chamber of Commerce, was a commissioner on the Loudoun County (VA) Economic Authority, an appointed member of GO Virginia to increase entrepreneurship in the tech industry in the area, and a member of the advisory committee for the George Washington University Virginia Campus.

Wheelless is a certified coach from MG Stakeholder Centered Coaching, the CaPP Institute, and is a member of the National Speakers Association. She holds a BA in Journalism/PR, an MA in Public Communications, and an MBA in Marketing.

She resides in the Washington DC Metro Area.